

THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD PROCESS

Earning the Congressional Award is an individual process; some young people choose to set goals at all six levels while others will set goals for the Gold Medal. Since all submissions are cumulative, once lower levels are approved, the hours, activities and months of activities are carried to the next level. Lower levels of the Award will be mailed directly to the participants if they are approved for higher levels.

Once participants **register** for the Award, they receive a packet containing:

- **Program Book:** Provides guidance in earning the Award, including how to set goals, select appropriate activities and tips for success
- **Record Book (included in Program Book):** Documents a young person must submit to earn the Award. Completing the Record Book is the minimum submission requirement.
- **Registration Letter:** Confirms registration and the Activity Start Date, or the date a young person signed his/her waiver. Activities completed after this date may count toward the Award.

Record Book Submission

Once participants reach their goals for whichever level they are aiming for, they should complete the Record Book, acquiring the necessary Validator signatures and comments. The Advisor then reviews the completed Record Book, providing comments and a signature as needed. Two copies should be made of the completed Record Book prior to submission – one for the Advisor and one for the youth. Once completed, the youth may begin working toward his/her goals for the next level.

Record Book Review Period

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for review of Gold Medal Record Book Submissions and 4 to 6 weeks for all lower levels. The National Deadline for Gold Medal Record Book submission is February 1st of each year. All lower level Record Books are accepted on a rolling basis and are reviewed by Regional Program Managers. Gold Medal Record Books are also reviewed by the Gold Medal Committee. If the program manager or Committee has any questions regarding the submission, he or she will work with the youth and Advisor for the needed clarification.

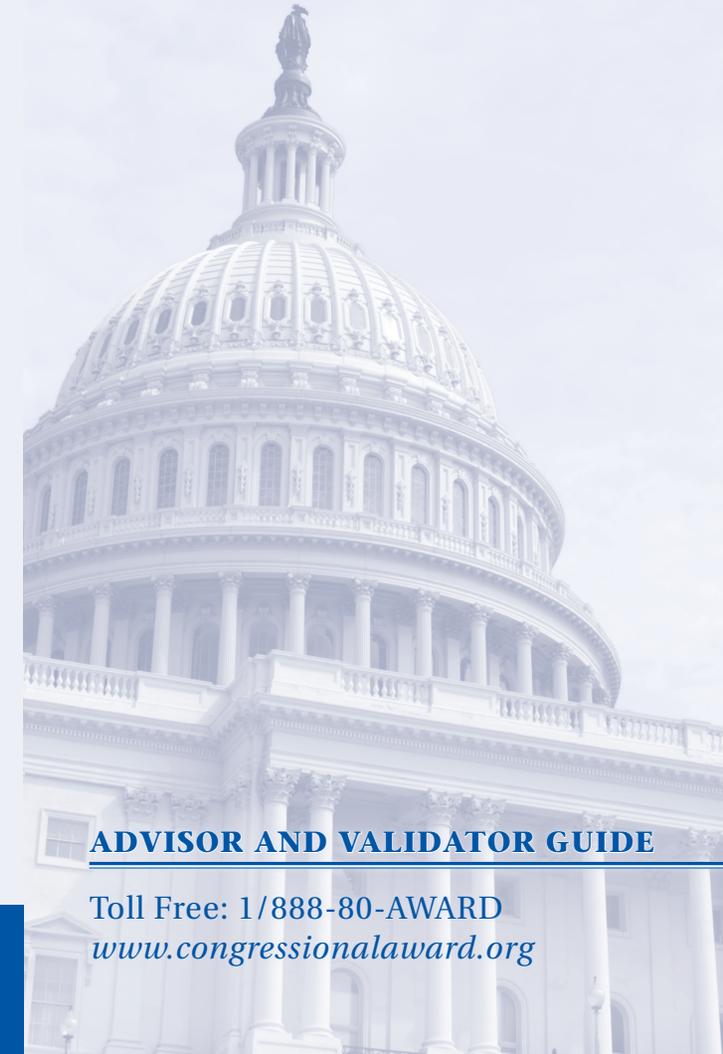
Congressional Award Presentations

Bronze, Silver and Gold Certificates are mailed directly to the youth. Bronze and Silver Medals are presented at the local level by the youth's member of Congress. Gold Medals are presented in Washington, DC, at the National Gold Medal Ceremony.

BEFORE YOU SIGN OFF ON A COMPLETED RECORD BOOK, BE SURE TO CHECK THE FOLLOWING:

- ❑ Has the young person presented his or her goals and activities well? Encourage the young person to keep neat records and clearly describe goals and activities. The Record Book is the minimum – if submitting additional materials will help show the young person's accomplishment, please encourage them to do so. Remember - we can only review what is submitted.
- ❑ Are the participant's goals specific? Goals that are too broad, such as "I will help serve my community" or "I will get into shape" are too vague. Please be sure that goals clearly state a specific objective and are challenging and measurable. While goals do not need to be closed out at each submission, there should be some progress.
- ❑ Has the participant spread out his or her Voluntary Public Service, Personal Development, and Physical Fitness hours? Earning a Congressional Award is a marathon not a sprint; The Congressional Award honors young people who develop lifestyles of service and personal challenge. Participants should make a commitment to their activities over a significant period of time, not simply complete the required hours quickly.
- ❑ Has the participant only listed the hours and dates that he or she worked on a certain activity at the current level? The National Office will keep track of cumulative hours and dates as the participant advances through the program. Participants should not include hours that have already been submitted.
- ❑ Has the participant provided you with documentation of the completed activities? While these supplemental materials are not required with submission, the participant should be documenting all activities completed towards a goal in case there are any questions about the Record Book. This documentation also helps you give feedback about the progress.
- ❑ Do the young person's Voluntary Public Service goals and activities benefit the greater community at large? Volunteer work should not be limited to a certain segment of the population, but should be accessible to and benefit anyone in the community.
- ❑ Has the participant fully detailed the Expedition/Exploration? Submissions should include an itinerary and a summary of the trip including instances of challenge, immersion and preparation. The write up should be detailed and fully describe the trip from start to finish.
- ❑ Has the participant completed all four program areas? Each level of the Award requires completion of all four program areas.
- ❑ Has the participant counted activities that may have been completed for class credit? Activities completed during school or for class credit cannot count towards the Award unless the participant has a full time job and is completing educational activities for Personal Development. All other activities should be completed outside of normal class time.

THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD



ADVISOR AND VALIDATOR GUIDE

Toll Free: 1/888-80-AWARD
www.congressionalaward.org

PHONE: 202/226-0130 FAX: 202/226-0131
E-MAIL: information@congressionalaward.org
TOLL FREE: 1/888-80-AWARD

Dear Advisor:

Thank you for your support of the Congressional Award program. We are delighted that you have chosen to work with us as an Advisor in partnership for the advancement of America's youth.

The Congressional Award is the highest award for youth legislated by the United States Congress and is a non-competitive program designed to honor young people for their commitment to public service and personal development. Participants work with adults in their communities to guide them through the goal-setting process and to monitor their progress toward the Award.

While any 14 to 23 year old may pursue a Congressional Award, it takes the commitment of adult volunteers to help them realize their potential. Your part in the Congressional Award is essential. Your guidance will be remembered long after the participant successfully meets his or her goals and is presented a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Certificate or Medal by Congress.

I'd like to thank you for advising youth in your community and encourage you to assist us in reaching more young people this year. Please pass on information about the program to any interested youth or adults in your area. With your help, we will reach new heights.

If you need additional information or materials, or if you have any questions, feel free to contact the National Office at 1/888/80-AWARD (29273) or email us at information@congressionalaward.org.

Thank you for your support and best of luck in all your endeavors.

Sincerely,



Erica W. Heyse
National Director
The Congressional Award

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO SERVE AS AN ADVISOR OR VALIDATOR?

Participants must choose an adult other than their parent, relative or peer. It is the responsibility of the participants to identify their Advisor and Validators. The National Office encourages participants to reach out into their communities to select an adult that they feel comfortable working with (and one who is acceptable to their parents) to help them set goals within each of the four required program areas. **The National Office does not match young people with Advisors.** Potential Congressional Award Advisors include teachers, Scoutmasters, guidance counselors, neighbors and youth leaders. Potential Congressional Award Validators include coaches, volunteer coordinators, instructors, youth group leaders and neighbors. Remember – the Advisor does more than just sign completed documents – young people have the opportunity to develop a professional relationship with an adult that will mentor them well beyond earning their Congressional Award. While some young people will choose to work with someone they know, like a friend's parent, it is encouraged that they seek other options for the Advisor.

WHY ADVISORS AND VALIDATORS?

The Congressional Award is designed to bridge the gap between adolescence and adulthood. Working with adults is one of the ways this can be achieved. **Participants should work with a minimum of five adults throughout the program - one Advisor and four Validators** - providing them with the opportunity to learn from adults outside of their family who share their enthusiasm, skill and experience.

By working with adults, the Congressional Award program encourages young people to establish new links within their communities. These links allow young people to explore new areas while learning more about themselves and the world around them. We encourage each participant to step outside of their comfort zone in hopes that there will be a possibility for new relationships to develop. Participants may inherit new values, come to understand the contributions they can make in the community, and build self esteem through the relationships with their Advisor and Validators.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ADVISOR AND A VALIDATOR?

ADVISORS meet with the young people while they set personally challenging goals, stay in touch while the participant works towards the Award and provide assistance with the Record Book detailing their goals and activities. The Advisor reviews the initial goals, provides feedback to participants if they hit a roadblock and confers with them when a Record Book is near completion. The Advisor role generally does not take more than an hour of time per month with some **additional time spent reviewing a Record Book before submission.**

The appropriate **VALIDATOR** depends upon the activities a participant selects to achieve his or her goals. The Validators should be knowledgeable or experienced in the activities pursued by the young person for a particular goal. If a young person's goal and activities involved basketball, a coach would make a suitable Validator. Similarly, if a young person volunteers at an animal shelter, an employee or the volunteer coordinator would be an appropriate Validator. The Validator is simply validating the activities, and providing feedback to the youth in the field they should be familiar with. The Validator role should not take more than an hour of additional time per month, already dedicated to overseeing the youth and the activities.

If an appropriate Validator can not be found, and the Advisor is knowledgeable in the specific program area, then the Advisor may serve as the Validator.

ADVISORS guide participants through the goal-setting process in each of the four program areas and monitor their progress toward the Congressional Award.

The Advisor's Role and Responsibilities:

- With the participant, review the Congressional Award requirements and guidelines as provided in the program book.
- Assist the participant in setting goals that are personally challenging, achievable, worthwhile, measurable, and fulfilling.
- Help the participant identify appropriate activities and qualified Validators for each goal.
- Maintain periodic contact with the participant while he or she works toward the Congressional Award.
- If the participant needs to revise goals, help him or her set new goals and find activities to achieve them.
- Encourage the participant to obtain written comments and signatures from his or her Validators as soon as an individual goal has been met.
- Once the participant has completed the set activities for a given Award level, review his or her records and help complete the Record Book.
- Provide Advisor comments that detail progress that the youth is making.
- Make a copy of the Record Book for yourself and the participant for your records.
- Once the participant has mailed in the Record Book, work with him or her to set new goals and begin working on the next level of the Award

VALIDATORS assist the participant with individual activities within a program area.

The Validator's Role and Responsibilities:

- Review the Congressional Award requirements and guidelines listed in the participant's program book.
- Discuss the specific requirements for the program area in which you'll be working with the participant.
- Help the participant identify his or her starting level in a particular area of endeavor.
- Make certain that the participant's goal is personally challenging, achievable, worthwhile, measurable, and fulfilling.
- Once minimum hours and duration of activities have been met in your program area, review all of the appropriate documentation and sign the Record Book.
- Provide Validator comments that detail progress that the youth is making